



WEEKLY REPORT

State Senator Gary Nodler
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SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE TAKES DRASTIC ACTION TO MAKE GOVERNOR ABIDE BY MISSOURI CONSTITUTION

As a direct result of Gov. Bob Holden's decision to ignore the directions of the General Assembly, the Senate Appropriations Committee has placed language into the 2005 Fiscal Year budget which would prevent the governor from using appropriated funds for any reason other than those designated.

You may recall from previous columns, Gov. Holden has continued to operate an office in Washington, D.C., after the General Assembly directed it closed and funding for the office was removed from the current budget.

In order to continue the office's operation, the governor charged the cost to state departments that most frequently used the services provided by the office.

The governor has continued to operate this office in direct violation of a legislative mandate. The only budget power the governor has is to withhold money. He does not have the authority to spend money that is not appropriated.

In the past we could rely on the honesty and integrity of the executive branch to follow a request made by the Legislature. It's obvious that we can no longer do that.

Therefore, it was necessary to enact this legislation to prevent the governor from acting outside the direction of the Missouri Legislature.

This section in the budget reads as follows: "The funds appropriated in this act shall only be used to fund designated purposes provided herein, and shall not be used, transferred, exchanged, or offset in any way to fund other purposes, including but not limited to, all purposes enumerated by any other appropriation bill approved by the 92nd General Assembly, Second Regular Session, except with the express written consent of the chairman and ranking member of the House Budget Committee and the chair and ranking member of the Senate Appropriations

Committee and subsequent approval of any such changes by Concurrent Resolution by the next regular session of the General Assembly.”

It is a pity that the governor has allowed his own partisan agenda to get in the way of governing this state. He has forced the Senate to take this drastic action in order to insure that Missouri government continues to operate as the Constitution mandates.

There has been some good news on the budget front. The governor finally decided to release the \$115 million that he had been withholding. The improved state’s budget picture comes as no surprise to me – or any member of the Appropriations Committee – which carefully scrutinized the numbers and were confident about our estimates.

This \$115 million is being released for the 2003-2004 school year, which is almost over. Unfortunately it offers little relief for the months of fiscal stress school districts in Southwest Missouri have been forced to deal with.

As required by the Missouri Constitution, the 2005 Fiscal Year budget must be completed by May 7.

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